

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6046

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONO HI

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 4024

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MILI, MPOL, PFOR, SN, NZ

SUBJ: GOS AGREES TO INDEFINITE EXTENSION OF NEW ZEALAND FORCES
IN SINGAPORE

1. DEPUTY NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER DAWSON INFORMED DCM
AUGUST 25 THAT VISIT OF NEW ZEALAND DEFENSE MINISTER MCCREADY
TO SINGAPORE (AUGUST 13-17) HAD BEEN SURPRISINGLY SUCCESSFUL.
WHEN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TALBOYS VISITED SINGAPORE LAST
MARCH, HE TOLD THE PRESS THAT NEW ZEALAND WOULD MAINTAIN
TROOPS IN SINGAPORE UNTIL THE END OF 1977 AFTER WHICH GNZ WOULD
MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. AT THAT TIME THERE WERE
CONTRADICTORY REPORTS WHETHER GOS WANTED NEW ZEALAND FORCES
TO REMAIN OR WAS ENCOURAGING THEIR DEPARTURE.

2. DAWSON SAID THAT SINCE TALBOYS' VISIT GNZ HAD STUDIES MATTER
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CAREFULLY AND CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS IN NEW ZEALAND'S INTEREST

TO SEEK GOS AGREEMENT TO CONTINUED STATIONING OF NEW ZEALAND FORCES IN SINGAPORE WELL BEYOND 1978. PRIMARY REASON WAS THAT IF NZ FORCES IN SINGAPORE WERE TO RETURN TO NEW ZEALAND, THERE WERE NO FACILITIES TO HOUSE THEM AND THAT IT WOULD COST NZ\$18 MILLION TO CONSTRUCT NECESSARY ACCOMMODATIONS. MULDOON'S GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING AN EXPENSIVE SUPERANNUATION SCHEME, AND THERE IS SIMPLY NO MONEY AVAILABLE FOR OTHER NEW PROJECTS. THEREFORE DEFENSE MINISTER MCCREADY WAS INSTRUCTED TO REQUEST GOS AGREEMENT THAT NZ FORCES BE ALLOWED TO STAY BEYOND 1978. ALTHOUGH MCCREADY DID NOT SUGGEST A TERMINAL DATE TO GOS, DAWSON SAID GNZ IS CONTEMPLATING POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT STAY FOR ANOTHER 3 YEARS BEYOND 1978, E.G. UNTIL 1981. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN NO DECISION AND GNZ WAS SIMPLY SEEKING GREATER FLEXIBILITY FOR PLANNING PURPOSES.

3. DAWSON SAID THAT IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH MCCREADY BOTH P.M. LEE AND DR. GOH MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT NZ FORCES WERE WELCOME TO STAY IN SINGAPORE WELL BEYOND 1978 IF GNZ SO WISHED. GOS LEADERSHIP WAS EQUALLY AMENABLE TO NZ FORCES LEAVING SOONER IF THEY SO DESIRED. IN SHORT, IT WAS UP TO GNZ TO DECIDE.

4. DAWSON SAID THAT HE AND HIS HIGH COMMISSIONER (ROGER PEREN) WERE FRANKLY AMAZED THAT GOS RESPONSE WAS SO FORTH-COMING, AND FELT IT SIGNALLED THAT GOS HAD COME TO SOME FAIRLY FIRM CONCLUSIONS REGARDING ITS FUTURE FOREIGN POLICY - ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA. NZ HIGH COMMISSIONER HAD THOUGHT THAT IN VIEW OF SRV ANTIPATHY TO FOREIGN FORCES BEING STATIONED IN THE REGION AND RECENT PHAN HIEN VISIT TO SINGAPORE, GOS WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR MORE CAUTIOUS IN ITS RESPONSE. HOLDRIDGE

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